The Art of Differentiation

National Extension Tourism - Park City, Utah
June 2009
1. The art of Differentiation

Why branding?

Why? Because we filter out everything not specifically appealing to us.

99% of all communities in the U.S. are working to attract business or employees.

We are exposed to nearly 1,200 marketing messages a day.

97% of all tourism & economic development advertising is ineffective.

What's the big deal?

We are exposed to nearly 1,200 marketing messages a day.

What isn't a brand?

1. No more than three words -
   Round Rock, TX: Sports Capital of Texas: “Game On”

2. It must be specific
   Battle Creek, MI: Competitive Sports: “Play for Keeps”

3. It should bring a picture to mind -
   Napa County or Napa Valley
   Marshall, TX: “Center Stage”

4. It should support the brand -
   Salado, TX: “Artfully Yours”

5. It must be unique -
   Asheville, NC: “Unscripted”

A WORD ABOUT SLOGANS:

The challenge:

Competition has never been more fierce.

Communities have been forced to specialize.

You MUST jettison the generic.

Welcome to the Era of the Brand:

The art of setting yourself apart

RULE (continued):

Your slogan is simply an exclamation point on your key message. It’s not the brand, it just reinforces it.

Do you go to Disneyland because their slogan is “The happiest place on earth”?
**What makes you a destination?**

**Communities:**
- Modesto - The tomato capital
- Ventura County - The strawberry capital
- Gilroy - The garlic capital
- Gridley - The kiwi capital
- Castroville - The artichoke capital
- Borrego Springs - The grapefruit capital
- Selma - The raisin capital
- Fresno - The fig capital

**RULE:**
Fruits & vegetables are part of your ambiance, not a sustainable brand.
The same goes for ranching, farming and other agricultural themes...

...unless you can make it different and experiential.

**RULE:**
Something for everyone is NOT a brand
Memberships can kill a branding effort

**What is a brand?**

A successful brand is specific, and NEVER generic.

A successful brand is always experiential - based on activities
NOT things to look at.

A brand is a perception, a feeling someone has about your community or business

**Case History: Asheville, NC**

Population: 70,000
Claim to fame: Along the Blue Ridge Parkway
Challenge: The parkway is 500 miles long

The brand slogan:
Where altitude affects attitude
How do you blend fine culture... 

...with counter culture?

Branding promise:
To provide a life enriching experience.
Engaging and delightful.
Result:
It is now THE destination along the Blue Ridge Parkway
National attention as the hip arts community
Nightlife drawing people from 100 miles away
Tourism a $1.7 billion industry in the county
Frommer’s Travel Guide one of the 12 Global
Must-See Destinations in 2007

The brand:
The hippest place to be in North Carolina
“Unscripted”

Case History: Prince Edward Island

Population: 70,000
Claim to fame: Anne of Green Gables
Challenge: Avonlea doesn’t exist

The brand:
An island province too far away to visit

RULE:
Successful brands are built on product not marketing

THE RULE:
The name must be synonymous with the brand
WORD GAMES
Communities:
Country music capital - Nashville
Gambling/adult fun - Las Vegas
Kids & family - Branson
Music theater Capital - Disneyland/Disneyworld
Graceland/Elvis - Memphis
Winery capital (U.S.) - Napa Valley
Frozen tundra - Green Bay, WI

WORD GAMES
Communities:
Hershey, PA - Chocolate
Gettysburg, PA - The Civil War
Lancaster, PA - Amish, Pennsylvania Dutch
Washington DC - Government
Hollywood - Movies and stars
Salem, MA - Witch trials
Your town - ????

THE RULE: Never, ever, use focus groups

1. The 6th slogan in ten years
2. Focus groups are never the way to build a brand
3. Creative services usually don’t get it
4. Cute and/or clever rarely work

THE RULE: Politics is the killer of any branding effort

How to build a brand
A 25-step process
(branding is not easy and is NOT a shallow exercise)
STEP #1: Get professional help - An outside “facilitator”

STEPS #2 - 5: Research:
- Determine the primary & secondary markets
- Local inventory for a “brand foundation”
- Competitive analysis
- Demographics, psychographics
- Perceptions (Tapestry Study) - local, regional

STEP #5: Educate the community about branding

THE FEASIBILITY TEST
1. Is this something the primary and secondary markets can’t get (or do) closer to home?
2. Will it extend our seasons?
3. Is it experiential? If it were in Gridley would you go there for it then turn around and come home?
4. How much will it cost and when will we see a return on investment?
5. Can the community buy into it over time?
6. Will and can the private sector invest in the brand?
7. How wide an audience will it attract?
8. Does it have legs? (Can we start with a niche, then add extensions to the brand?)
9. Do we have those who will tirelessly champion the cause? (Every brand requires pioneers.)
10. Can we make it obvious and pervasive throughout the community?

STEP #6: Ask the community. What is our brand or what should it be?

STEP #7: Run the ideas through the feasibility test

STEP #8: Product development plan

STEP #9: Get the brand champions & pioneer(s) on board
Your “Brand Leadership Team”
STEPS #10 - 14: Develop the brand perceptions and vision:
What will it look and sound like?
What do we want people to think of Vacaville?
Key marketing message
Niche brands & markets
Identity concepts & testing

STEP #15: Develop the “Graphics System”

- Community gateways and entry points
- Downtown gateways
- Informational kiosks
- Wayfinding system
- Pole banners
- Streetscapes, plaza areas, facade improvements
- Marketing materials

STEP #16: Work to obtain public buy-in
(Note: everyone won’t buy in)
STEP #17: Define the roles (everyone organization plays a role)

STEP #19-20: Sell the community
Keep the focus narrow!

STEP #21: Recruit & promote supporting businesses

STEP #23: Implement the PR program

STEP #24: Review and revisit the plan every year or two

STEP #25: Never give up

Sign up for the free monthly DDI Newsletter
www.DestinationDevelopment.com
It's right there on the home page.